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The
American Historical Review

RELIGION STILL THE KEY TO HISTORY¹

THERE are three men in the world whose daily doings and sayings especially interest it:—the Emperor William, President Roosevelt, and the Pope of Rome. Two command public attention by the union of great official powers with strong native faculties of mind and will. The third commands it almost purely from his official character. He governs no territory, although his authority is daily felt in the remotest quarters of the globe and he holds a court to which great nations send ambassadors. In the sphere where he does bear rule, he has evinced no faculty of individual initiative. He has no force of speech, no power of the pen. The son of a simple peasant, his greatness consists in his headship of a venerable and world-wide church, and in his thus standing, more than any other man, as the representative of a great religion.

Lamprecht tells us that history is “an sich nichts als angewandte Psychologie.” To this extent certainly the epigram rings true that history can never neglect to take into account whatever psychological forces move peoples or actuate leaders of peoples. Such a force has always been found, is still found, in religion. It is one of those—vague, impulsive, constant in play, inconstant in intensity—which deny to the historical student the power of scientific prediction.

Ours is an age of more reverence for human reason and less reverence for human authority. But as reverence for human authority becomes less, a conviction deepens that men are subject to a power greater than themselves. We may call it Nature, or call it God. What we know is that it speaks by laws—invariable laws. What we feel is that it is a thing of mystery;—too great to be meas-

¹ Annual Address of the President of the American Historical Association, delivered December 26, 1906.

ured from earth; too far from man, near though it be at every step, to be so much as seen in all its outline by his philosophy.

The relation of history to religion has been greatly changed during the last two centuries. What we call modern history, and distant times may deem to be that of the Middle Ages, had its real beginning when modern government arose, and that was when the peoples of France and the United States, as they gathered in the fruits of their revolutions, pronounced that absolute religious liberty was one. Civil liberty and popular government were no new things in the world. A state without a church was. Guizot has said that Democracy was introduced into Europe by a foreign missionary named Paul. If this be so, it was a democracy whose motive and sphere were religious. Political democracy dis severed from religion was to come seventeen centuries later.

It was to take from religion its legal authority, but only to strengthen its moral power. Until the "ideas of 1789" took formal shape, history had been the record of what the few did with the help of the many. It has since been the record of what the many do, with the help of the few. It may well be that at some time the leaders—the few who are in authority in any nation—may be careless of religion. The many—or at the least, the whole people—never will be. If a majority should be indifferentists or irreligious, the minority will be all the more devoted to the cause to which they attribute a sacred character.

Religion offers in statecraft a means of resting policy upon principle. It is, as Talleyrand has said, only when rested upon principle that a policy can endure.¹ The principles sanctioned by the religion of the time are incontestable. Later times may discard them. But to each generation of any people the principles instilled by ministers of religion under the sanction of the church will permeate society and become a part of its being—of what in the truest sense is its political constitution.

I use religion to signify something real, and not less real because to one set of men it is one thing, to another set another thing. It does not seem to me that Renan was right when he said that "*Les religions, comme les philosophies, sont toutes vaines; mais la religion, pas plus que la philosophie, n'est vaine.*"² No religion is wholly vain. Each is true to its disciples, and in its truth to them inspires their lives. History has to do with all religions, because it has to do with all men.

¹ *Memoirs*, Putnam's edition, II. 124.

² *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël*, I. xxviii.

Every great religion has come at the beginning with a resistless power. It comes as the expression by some clear-sighted, high-strung leader of men of what has long lain confusedly in the minds of many of his fellow-countrymen, now first really disclosed to them and clothed with a light and power that is wholly new. There is a truth in it, or it would not be great; and truth endures.

Such a religion has a beginning, but it will have no end until the national ideas of the peoples to whom it has presented a new conception of life are radically changed. It worked a social revolution when it first appeared, but the shock of it then, however great, was less of a world-force than the trembling, far-diffused, which in after years and ages has marked its continued life. It is a permanent addition to the energies of civilization.

As a key to history, religion has changed its form since the overthrow of the ancient order of things that marked the close of the eighteenth century; but its strength remains the same.

Once that strength was largely found in the power of an established church, or of a sentiment of opposition to an established church. Now it is coming more from the force of the principles for which, at bottom, churches stand, in influencing general public opinion.

Once it received large expression in the fine arts, brought to the service of ecclesiasticism. The pyramids, the Greek temple no less than the Gothic cathedral, the paintings of the masters of former days, in Asia as well as Europe, the great music of the past, were all its offspring. To-day these arts turn for the most part elsewhere for their inspiration and ideals.

The artist is tired of the anthropomorphism by which his predecessors degraded the divine. The architect is planning, the decorator is adorning, museums, libraries, lecture halls, state-houses, more than churches. The composer meets every mood. But there is here, too, a line that never can be passed. A school of art may be non-religious. It cannot be irreligious, and endure.

Once religion led to alliances of nations for no other cause than that they shared the same form of it and wished, perhaps, to secure it a wider spread. Against such connections the Peace of Westphalia, with its rule of *cujus regio, ejus religio*, shut one door, and the futile outcome of the Holy Alliance closed another. In international affairs the distinction between Christian and infidel has passed away as fully as that between Greek and barbarian; but that which is vital to all religions and common to all religions is but the more clearly seen, and strongly felt.

History has a place in "the literature of power." It has it only by right of the human motive that controls events and the imagination that can see and paint it.

There was a half-truth in what Sir Edward Burne-Jones once said, that there were but four English historians: Shakespeare, Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray. There is no historian who is not an artist. He must tell his story in a large way. He is concerned with what is in essence part of a long process. Facts, as Macaulay puts it, are the dross of history. Their relations to us are what is to be fined out, and when these are found in religion, something great has at once come in to dignify the work.

Herbert Spencer has said that in the fine arts "a work . . . which is full of small contrasts and without any great contrasts, sins against the fundamental principles of beauty".¹ The thought may be extended to historical literature. There must be great contrasts to make any particular history effective. But more than this, it is only so far as it presents great contrasts that any history, be it particular or universal, is true. They are its soul. They are the moving cause of the trivial events and common course of things which conceal them from general observation.

Such contrasts, in those states of society with which the historian has to deal, enter into each human life. They come from those two things which, as Kant said, fill every man with a certain awe—the starry heavens and the still, small voice of his own conscience. This conscience may be largely a product of human evolution. It means little or nothing to the savage. The starry heavens mean little to him. But he is impressed by the inborn or from birth in-trained conviction that there are higher and unseen powers, one or many, from whom something is to be feared or gained. Man enters organized society without losing this conviction. He feels himself bound to something higher and stronger. The bond may easily become a fetter, but on the whole it makes life larger and less selfish.

What is natural to man is inherited from generation to generation. Whatever he has acquired—be it of thought or knowledge—must be taught over again by each generation to the next, if it is to endure. Religion is part of his nature—a spiritual possession which education does not give, except in form, and seldom takes away.

That the religion of every race has, down to recent times, gone far to shape its history, few will dispute. Does its controlling influence on national conditions pass away before a higher civiliza-

¹ *Autobiography*, II. 408.

tion and a wider knowledge? May it be a key to the life of a tribe of savages, but only as an incident of immaturity and ignorance? Does the key grow rusty, as time goes on? Or is the religious motive one of the inherent, universal, and eternal forces that must, in all ages, deeply affect, if not vitally control, the doings of men, as massed in nations, in matters of national concern?

Perhaps the answer hangs on what the religious motive is. If it be to secure some personal good, whether here or hereafter, for oneself or one's family, it will be inevitably weakened by advances in civilization. All those advances are towards altruism. Altruism proceeds from the spirit of self-sacrifice, and that is the highest spring of religion. "Selfish and interested individualism", says John Morley, "has been truly called non-historic. Sacrifice has been the law—sacrifice for creeds, for churches, for dynasties, for kings, for adored teachers, for native land."¹

It is this spirit which gives all its nobility to the story of our race. As it brought all Christendom together in the Crusades, so it brought the civilized world together in the Conference of Peace at the Hague in 1899. In each of these great movements it was distinctly associated with religion—blindly in the one, truly in the other. That the ancient distinction between Christian and infidel found no place in the rescript of the Czar, which led to the Hague Conference, was of itself some proof of its essentially religious motive.²

¹ "Democracy and Reaction", *Nineteenth Century*, April, 1905 (vol. 57, p. 547).

² At a critical moment in the proceedings of the Hague Conference of 1899, there came into the hands of the president of the American delegation a letter sent out by the Protestant Episcopal bishop of Texas to the clergy of his diocese with a form of prayer to be used in all the churches, asking the blessing of God on the work of the Conference in the interests of peace. The Emperor of Germany had instructed his representatives to oppose the institution of any court of arbitration. Mr. White was at the time preparing a despatch to the German prime minister urging him to use his influence to secure a reconsideration of the question. He referred to the letter of the bishop as an important utterance of a widely prevailing Christian sentiment, which could not be disregarded, and also handed it to the bearer of the despatch, his associate, the late Dr. Holls, to use as he might think best. Dr. Holls showed it to the chancellor, Prince Hohenlohe, who—a strong religionist—was evidently affected by it. Not long afterwards, the German delegation took a position favorable to the treaty of arbitration, and Mr. White refers to the incident as "perhaps an interesting example of an indirect 'answer to prayer.'" *Autobiography of Andrew D. White*, II. 311, 322.

We have his authority also for the statement that religion in a curious way dictated the original call for the Hague Conference. The Czar acted in the matter on the advice of Pobedonostseff. Pobedonostseff desired a reduction of armaments as the only means which he could see to give Russia the means to increase her grants for the benefit of the State church. *Ibid.*, 269-270.

Thus far in the history of the earth, the mass of mankind have ever sought to regulate their conduct by their desires. Civilization has somewhat modified their desires. It has given them new forms, inspired them by new influences, turned them in new directions, subjected them to certain conventions; but individual desires are still what press forward as the natural motive-forces in and of organized society.

Nevertheless they have seldom for any long period ruled the course of society. There has been a minority of the people, actuated by counter-forces of an intensive character and power, sufficient to make it stronger than the majority in so far as to beat down mere desire and replace it by some theory which all recognize as more noble and worthy. Philosophers have led one wing of this minority; religionists the other. And which has proved the stronger force, religion or philosophy? Which appeals to the most minds? Which appeals to the most hearts? To the heart, religion alone. The morals, the ideals of the philosopher are powerless with the multitude unless touched by the fire of emotion and quickened by that faith in the unseen which turns human things into divine things.

The philosophic thought of Eastern literature is also religious. The effect of this literature on the Western mind has become, during the last half-century, quite considerable. It has reinforced the Emersonian school and given new recognition to reverence for the mysterious in the order of the universe.

Religion, being man's conception of what is fit for a superhuman or divine order of things, must vary in form to correspond with differences in human insight and knowledge. Following the general law for all that lives, formulated by Spencer and Darwin, it everywhere proceeds in its manifestations from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, and must continue in this course. It is not that the ultimate object of search changes. The attitudes and capacities of the observers change. If any particular religion ever overspreads the earth and gains universal acceptance, it will gain it everywhere by taking its color, like the chameleon, from the soil, or perhaps, as to-day with the Christian religion, assuming many colors on the same soil. Only the motive and the general moral product will be cosmic.

Men owe to their mothers their first introduction to the world of the mind and the spirit. Women are, by their inherent nature, religious beings. Equality of civil rights before the law will never disturb the poise of that nature. It is never satisfied to be en-

sphered within itself. It seeks to ally itself with something stronger. It responds readily to the mysterious. In a sense it is true that the life of every man turns on what is to be his relation to some woman. In a much deeper sense is it true that the life of every woman turns on what is to be her relation to some man. If happiness of home be denied to a man, he may find, or fancy that he finds, the void filled in the busy world. If it be denied to a woman, she cannot. She feels the void too deep to fill, unless it be by a peace that the world can neither give nor take away. And if happiness of home be given to a woman, she is more apt than man to think it but a gift from some higher power.

These sentiments that from childhood imbue half the human race, that half instils in childhood into the whole. The first knowledge that comes to the babe in arms is that there is a protecting and supporting power, from which he receives everything, and to which he renders nothing but confidence and love. He grows into a child. Other forms rise up around him with which he finds himself in close relation. Motives of conduct are put before him; duty to parents, among the first. There are few to whom a mother's voice does not suggest a reason for this duty in a divine command. The very oaths the boy will hear uttered upon the street will bear the same message in a different dress.

A race, as Renan said, lives forever on its recollections of childhood. Impressions of religion then gained are never absolutely effaced. Like the secret despatch written in lemon-juice, they reappear at the touch of fire—in moments of deep feeling and supreme effort. It is by what is done at such moments that battles are won, parliamentary majorities change, dynasties fall.

The most uncompromising materialist is seldom without his obligations to early impressions for his contentment with his surroundings. There will be still, though he be not conscious of it, some lingering subjection to their power. As Dr. Barry in his sketch of Renan has said, "the sceptic lives on a capital stored up during the days when he believed. He is a philosopher on half-pay."

Religion is a large word. Matthew Arnold's epigram expresses but a half-truth. Religion is morality—the morality of the time and of the race—touched with emotion—the emotion of the human heart. But as emotion is not self-contained, neither is it self-produced. It is a feeling of one towards another or with another, or else it is a feeling inspired by a memory of another or a conception of the ideal. The one is the more passionate: the other is the more profound. Either is a strong spring of action.

But one is of the earth: the other transcends the earth. Each has often turned the course of history. It has been suddenly and sharply turned by emotions that belong to the present, that awoke or were awakened by like emotion in another. It has seldom been permanently turned or permanently guided by these. That is the work of the emotions fed by the unseen; emotions for which we owe nothing to our senses, nothing to ourselves. For if man is the measure of the universe, it is only because he sees that it is immeasurable, and feels that there is something immeasurable within himself which is a part of the immeasurable beyond himself. This feeling, this emotion of the heart, passing into a conviction of the mind, is the quickening spirit that makes our customs or morals flower into religion.

Theologians, speaking for their realm of science, call it, as it appears there, faith—or perhaps faith in those who profess the doctrines to which they adhere; superstition, in other men. Historians, as it appears in their realm of science, all see it in loyalty to national ideals, reverence for national institutions, veneration for the heroes of the past. All of them, I think it may be fairly said, have not been as ready to acknowledge its rightful power over a people when it turns their thoughts towards that transcendent energy which those call divine who feel that it brings them into a personal relation with the unseen and the unknowable.

It may take the shape of pure theism. It may find divinity shining through a human form. It may find it in every man.

The modern world, so far as the leaders of its thought can speak for it, is less confident than the world of a thousand or ten thousand years ago that there exists a being detached from all else so like ourselves that we can name it like one of us, a person, and presume to define its attributes in terms of human speech. It is more confident that there is a power in the universe that so controls or constitutes it in a settled order of relations and causation that all may safely trust in the continuance of that order without a break. It is more confident also that it is a power that, in the sum of things, makes for what is good as well as true and is worthy the highest name we can invent for it—the name of God.

If there be anything in the theory of the monist; if there be but one actuality in the universe, and that motion, or a force expressed in motion, the manner of that motion is, or seems to us, ruled by attraction. Attraction draws little things to great things: earths to suns; men—for their bodies—to the earth; but for their thinking selves it is still the dominating faith that these are in like manner,

if insensibly, yet surely, drawn towards a greater thinking self, as source and end.

Ruskin said of Sainte-Beuve, that he never for a moment admitted to himself the possibility of a True as well as an Ideal Spirit, or God.¹ It is precisely this which threw Sainte-Beuve out of touch with the people about him, and shut him out of the public heart. Spencer built on better foundations. His own conceptions might differ widely from those of English people. He might declare that "that which persists, unchanging in quantity but ever changing in form, under these sensible appearances which the Universe presents to us, transcends human knowledge and conception—is an unknown and unknowable Power, which we are obliged to recognize as without limit in space and without beginning or end in time."² But if unknowable to him, this Power was not one with which he would lightly reckon as respects its influence on others. As Frederic Harrison said—and said rightfully—Spencer "looked to the unknowable environment behind the world of sense and knowledge as the sphere and object of religion." To the positivist, the unknowable environment is no less an admitted fact, but—to use Harrison's language again—"the only intelligible sphere of religion must be the knowable", and "the elements of the unknowable are immutably set in the canons of experience".

The church of the world stands nearer to Spencer. It disdains the dogma that the knowable is immutably measured by any form of human experience. The world in general rejects it. It is unscientific. Who would have said, a century ago, that the voice of a friend speaking in Denver could be heard in New York, and recognized in every intonation as easily as if he were in the same room with him who is addressed? Who would have said, twenty years ago, that a ray of light could be so framed and directed as to light up the interior of the human body and show the skeleton within it? Who would have said, ten years ago, that there was a heat-producing mineral that never cooled? What canons of scientific experience brought within the range of probable assumption marvels like these? Surely it is but reasonable to expect that the common people will look at each new discovery of such a kind as fresh proof of an intelligent creator, and another step nearer to knowledge of what He is.

The full power of such a belief is seldom felt by those who are themselves unaffected by it. For this cause, if for no other, the

¹ *Letters to Charles Eliot Norton*, II. 13.

² *Autobiography*, I. 652.

historian whose judgments will be accepted by future generations must write in a religious spirit. He cannot use a key too large for him to grasp. I mean here by religion a reverent consciousness of a power (be it law or spirit) manifest in nature, which is stronger than man, and a sense of obligation to answer its demands. Its common fruits, ripened by human association, have through all historic times been what in those times passed for collective virtue and self-sacrifice. The historian must respect these qualities. He must share in them, so far at least as to recognize them in others, and recognize their controlling force.

George Sand makes her Marquis de Villemer declare that "Jamais une conscience troublée, jamais un esprit faussé n'entendront l'histoire." It will be always inclining to search out or invent some unworthy motive, some low design, in the greatest acts. It cannot comprehend that in which it has no part. Nor can the man whose conscience is untroubled and spirit true, but to whom himself the religious motive is a stranger, appreciate what may be its mastery of others. Particularly is this true where behind the religious motive is the conviction of the personality of God. He to whom the divine stands as a being detached from all beside, will go farther and dare more for the love of God or fear of God, than the man to whom the divine transcends all personality and permeates whatever the universe contains. The very conception of such an immanence of God in the world is at once too vast and too subtle for the ordinary mind. It diffuses a power which the other conception concentrates. It turns a guide into a theory.

If mankind is always craving heroes to worship, much more it craves a King of Kings, eternal in the heavens. The thought of unity in nature—of a single purpose or power to which all that we see or know or feel is related—is common to most of the great religions. It is also a vital part of them. To those who are possessed by it, it seems a clue by which to trace back every event of history to its farthest source. It is distinctly a religious clue.

It naturally associates itself with the thought of unity in human authority.

To the Mohammedan, religion is still the centralizing force in government that it was for a thousand years to the Christian world. Medieval Europe could conceive only of one spiritual head and of one imperial head on earth. It was this sentiment that kept the Holy Roman Empire in life centuries after, as Voltaire declared, it was no longer Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire.

Convince the mass of any people that a change of custom or

of law, or no change of custom or law; that a war or no war; the maintenance of an ancient policy or the substitution of another; the support of an existing government or its overthrow; is demanded by duty to God, and you have a motive of action that is likely to prove irresistible. It is a motive easy to apprehend and there are always those who are ready to suggest it. Not only are they ready, but they have a vantage-ground which gives to what they say peculiar weight. It is that of the church.

Between man and religion stands everywhere something in the nature of ecclesiastical authority, either self-asserted, or governmentally affirmed. The formalism in religion which naturally results from an established church makes for conservatism in politics. In proportion to the hold which such a church has on the community, it saps the springs of popular enthusiasm, and makes against business activity. Time which would otherwise be spent in labor is consumed in feast-days or fast-days. Leisure is gained, but at high cost and under circumstances unfriendly to its best use. In public educational institutions studies of more importance are apt to be put aside for instruction in the symbols and liturgies of the church.

The same tendencies proceed in all countries from churches to which a large majority of the people belong, though not established by law, if they are ceremonial in their institutions. This cause has colored the life of the people and vitally affected the course of industry in Spanish America¹ and British India.

There are twenty American republics. Two of them, Cuba and San Domingo, are bound to us by political ties of a peculiar character. The rest shun us. We want their trade, but it goes to Europe. We want their sympathy, but what we receive is rather apprehension and suspicion. We meet them in Pan-American Congresses, but while projects are framed few are consummated. Why is it that with their political institutions so largely copied from us, they are foreign to us in spirit? Race and language, I believe, have been less the cause than religion. Religion counts more with them in influencing habits of thought and measures of social order. The church, as such, is a greater power.

In South America and Central America the church was so long the only fountain of education, that public sentiment deemed it a sufficient source. There are countries in which the state has assumed this function, where churches have been found to promote

¹A striking, and not inaccurate, forecast of its probable history was made in a letter from Jefferson to Lafayette, of May 14, 1817. *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Memorial edition, XV. 116.

its efforts for their own sake. In Finland, for instance, in the Lutheran denomination which there prevails, confirmation is refused to those who cannot read, and the consequence is that illiteracy is rare. So in a conquered country, if an established church survives, it may prove a nursery of patriotism. Modern Greece as an independent kingdom owes its existence to the Greek church. This kept alive the national feeling and tongue during the long years of Turkish occupation.¹

The church appeals to what is poetic in our nature, and as our associate President Woodrow Wilson has finely said: "We live by Poetry; and not by Prose."

But the only true establishment of a church is in the hearts of those who belong to it. If they have faith in its principles, these will have a large influence in guiding their action as citizens in public affairs. Fear of its discipline, be it established or unestablished, will not.

The attitude of every important church towards socialism is antagonistic. If it become official antagonism, it loses power. Why is socialism steadily growing in political weight, throughout Europe? Why in France did its friends cast nearly half a million more votes at the elections of this year, than in any previous one? It is a sign of the decadence there of the power of the Vatican, pushed unwisely to the front in its encyclicals. It was a natural incident of the struggle which was separating church and state. As Professor Blondel has said of it: "Le peuple français est sans doute moins irréligieux qu'on ne le prétend quelquefois, mais il est très défiant à l'égard de tout ce qui lui apparaît comme une ingérence cléricale, et n'accorde pas volontiers sa confiance à ceux qu'il soupçonne de sympathie à l'égard du 'gouvernement des curés.'"²

The jealousy of clerical government on the part of the French people, however, is largely because they have learned to look on it as a government inspired from Rome, subject to Rome.

One of last year's books bears the title *Les Deux Frances*. They are the France of the Blacks and the France of the Reds; of the party of King and Church, and that of Revolution. A party standing for old institutions cannot easily be displaced by a party standing for new institutions, unless these rise up as the outcome and expression of a spirit of individualism, native to the soil. If each party rests for its support on corporate influences, the struggle will

¹ *Autobiography of Andrew D. White*, II. 439.

² *Blätter für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft und Volkswirtschaftslehre*, July, 1906, p. 178.

be long and doubtful. There are still therefore *les deux Frances*, ever in conflict. The King—the thought of a restored monarchy—has almost disappeared as a constitutive force. But so has the Revolution. To that the corporate influences of the Republic have succeeded, and to-day it is the France of the Church contending with the France of the Republic. If the Church should learn to encourage the individual initiative of its followers—to let Frenchmen direct the course in France of the Roman church—the France of the Blacks may yet prevail.

The history of any people will be largely governed by its means of education. How far shall it extend? By whom shall it be furnished and controlled? “Educate your masters” is the command of political philosophy to the modern state. No education can be deemed complete which does not treat to some extent of religion. Yet if it be given at public expense, the cost will be borne by some who scout at all religion, and many who disagree with the prevailing forms of it.

The position which the world is gradually taking on this subject rests on principles foreshadowed in colonial Maryland and Rhode Island; first formally asserted by any government on purely humanitarian grounds in 1786 by Jefferson’s statute of religious liberty in Virginia; and spread over a wider field by the Constitution of the United States.

The utmost point that had been previously reached was that religious liberty should be as great as the safety of the state permitted. Now it was declared that no limitations were required by the safety of the state. Yet here more than almost anywhere else is seen the difficulty of reconciling it with religious sentiment.

The King of Bavaria, in a state paper early in the last century, declared that in public education religion was not to be taught at the cost of learning, nor yet learning at the cost of religion. There are still many, however, who believe it to be to the cost of learning for the state to assume to teach that, without making religion a part of it.

More than a million children are being educated in the United States every year in the various schools of the Roman Catholic Church. The cost of this can hardly be less than twenty-five or thirty million dollars. Those who pay it are also required by the state to contribute as much as any other tax-paying citizens to the support of the public schools. It is no small force which leads these men to assume such burdens. It is the conviction that educa-

tion is incomplete unless religion be taught as part of it, added to the belief that the best form of religion, or we might say perhaps the only form of true religion, is that of which their own church is the expression.

Holland has profited by our experience, and since 1857 has forbidden religious instruction in her public schools. The Catholics were not content to have it given by Calvinists, nor Calvinists to let it come from Catholics. Similar considerations, fortified by an influence substantially unfelt in Holland—that of socialism, have now thoroughly secularized education in France, but only after the most bitter contests. In both English and Canadian politics the same question is now the dominating one.

The position of Russia in this respect has been one of the circumstances weakening her as a great power as well as leading directly to revolutionary change. The church has had the full direction of the public schools. For the first three years, it kept the children simply learning prayers by rote, except for a little drill towards the close in mental arithmetic. No instruction in reading was required. The product of such a system is not simply popular unintelligence. It is an unreal quietude, easily passing into a blind fury, under the influences of a century like ours.

Religious tests for ordinary offices have been largely abolished, even in monarchical governments, but whenever in these there is a state church, the monarch, as its head, remains bound to it by vows so solemn as to prove the conviction of the people that nothing can safely be yielded there. The coronation oath of King Edward stood for the same dogmatic rigidity in its reference to the papacy as did that of an opposite kind imposed on his niece, the Princess Ena, before she could be Queen of Spain.¹

There is no civilized nation in recent years where the state supports the church, in which there has not been so much dissatisfaction with that policy as to inspire some public opposition. In many, the

¹ This was "I, recognizing as true the Catholic and apostolic faith, do hereby publicly anathematize every heresy, especially that to which I have had the misfortune to belong. I agree with the Holy Roman Church, and profess with mouth and heart my belief in the Apostolic See, and my adhesion to that faith which the Holy Roman Church, by evangelical and apostolical authority, delivers to be held. Swearing this by the sacred Homooousion, or trinity of the same substance, and by the holy gospels of Christ, I do pronounce those worthy of eternal anathema who oppose this faith with their dogmas and their followers, and should I myself at any time presume to approve or proclaim anything contrary hereto, I will subject myself to the severity of the canon law. So help me God, and these his holy gospels."

opposition has already triumphed: in all, it will. The disestablishment of the Church in Ireland, in the face of the solemn provision to the contrary in the Act of Union, will some day be followed by the disestablishment of the Church of England, whose numbers have recently sunk to a minority of the English people. In France, the separation of the state from the churches, first in regard to education, and then at all points, has been the great political issue for a quarter of a century. The French Revolution could not accomplish it. Though in the Constitution of 1791 it was asserted that all the property of the church belonged to the nation, and the Concordat ten years later confirmed it, it was only in this present year that France ventured seriously to stand upon her title.

A church to which the mass of any people belongs will exert a stronger influence on them than on their leaders in civil affairs. These leaders will be better fitted to exercise an independent judgment. They will be more moved by motives of personal ambition. Religion will not be to them the one thing to elevate their thoughts beyond the narrow round of domestic life.

But of those who direct affairs in any nation in which government formally avows and teaches in its schools the existence of a higher spiritual power few will escape the conviction that in this at least there is truth. A belief in God leads to a trust in God in great emergencies, and to an inspiring identification of God and country. In war, this motive is as strong to-day as it was a thousand years ago. The *Cambridge Modern History*, after giving one volume to the Reformation, devotes another to what it styles the Wars of Religion. The Wars of Religion did not end in the seventeenth century, nor in the nineteenth. France is still sore from her losses by the last.

The influences of an ecclesiastical establishment and of the simple religious motive were curiously intertwined in what led to the fall of Napoleon III. The relations of Germany to the papacy had an important influence in bringing on first the war between Austria and Prussia in 1866 and then that between France and Prussia in 1870, both fomented from Rome, as events likely to prove a check to the Protestant interest in Europe.¹ The proclamation of the German Empire at Versailles was the unexpected fruit—unexpected but not unnatural. The German fought for God and fatherland. The French were permeated by the godless philosophy of the first republic.

¹ See *Autobiography of Andrew D. White*, II. 350.

The German is taught religion in the school. He is reminded of it from the throne. The Emperor William, as fully as the Czar, seizes every opportunity to claim a divine sanction for his authority.¹ He has thrust France aside as the universal protector of Catholic missions in the East, and found his profit in it by large territorial acquisitions in China, seized in retaliation for outrages on German missionaries. He has made his pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

France, too, of late, in the same way, has so shaped her Chinese policy that the flag has followed the missionary. The republic has clung to the ecclesiastical prerogatives of the monarchy, though with the abrogation of the Concordat it is difficult to see how its protectorate over Eastern missions can hereafter be asserted.

A religious motive in foreign affairs can only be seriously advanced when a religious motive is recognized in home affairs. The loss of that in the French Revolution was one of the first things of the consequence of which, after the restoration, Talleyrand warned Louis XVIII. when consulting with him over the best assurances with which to surround his throne. You have, said he, to deal with a people "accustomed to found their rights on their pretensions, and their pretensions on their power." "Formerly, religious influence could support royal authority; it can do so no longer, now that religious indifference has pervaded all classes, and become almost universal." "Royal authority can therefore only derive support from public opinion, and to obtain this it must be in accord with that opinion."²

It may be doubted whether religious indifference was so widespread in the France of 1815, when this was written. If so, it was because of a torrent of revolution which for the time had swept before it the good and the bad alike. That torrent has left to public opinion a lasting place of power over human governments, but it has also, I believe, left religion in its old place as the main foundation of public opinion.

Early in 1905, the Emperor of Germany, in a public address,³ declared that the defeats of Russia in her war with Japan were due to the deplorable condition of Russian Christianity. It was deplorable because directed by a state church which failed to respond to the spirit of the times. None of its members could abandon it for another without forfeiting all civil rights, including that of holding

¹ See particularly his speech at Coblenz, August 31, 1897, quoted in Reinsch, *World Politics*, p. 301.

² *Memoirs of Talleyrand*, Putnam's edition, III. 130, 147.

³ On March 9, 1905, in an address before the naval recruits at Wilhelmshaven.

property. Its principal functionary, M. Pobedonostseff, was a conservative of the conservatives, to whom the Orthodox Greek Church seemed the only thing that bound the many peoples of Russia into the Russian people.¹ The creed of this church is medieval: of its teachings and influence Tolstoi has told, and the world believes him.

The very month after the sharp words of the German Emperor, the Czar, against the protest of Pobedonostseff, decreed religious liberty; and his subsequent convocation of the Douma was closely followed by directions to the Metropolitan who is president of the Holy Synod to call a general council of the Orthodox Greek Church. No such council had met since 1654. It can hardly fail to give a new direction to the religious life of the mass of the Russian people.² Already they have shown a new interest in what it stands for by a general inquiry for copies of the Bible. More parts of Bibles and Testaments were sold in Russia last year than in any year before, over half a million in European Russia alone. The fruits have not thus far made for peace, but they may be worth more than peace.

A department of the Holy Synod, until recently, as a bureau of "Spiritual Censure", held control of all publications on ecclesiastical history, theology, or philosophy. Nothing could be published or sold, on these topics, without its permission. It is worth noting that from 1863 this bureau forbade the circulation of any part of the Old Testament except the Psalms, in the languages of the people. There was too much in the other books that breathed the spirit of revolution.

It may indeed be safely said that no single cause for the spread of religious liberty and, by consequence, of civil liberty in modern times has been so powerful as the circulation of the Bible in all languages. It is to-day pronounced by publishers to be the best-selling book in the world.³ The market for it has steadily broadened with and because of the new latitude of interpretation and criticism countenanced by modern churches.

The last sixty or seventy years has indeed given to Christendom a new Bible. It is not that so very much has been discovered by

¹ *Autobiography of Andrew D. White*, II., chap. 36.

² Before these changes, Pobedonostseff and his school had relied on the popular reverence for religion as the main support of autocracy. If there be such a thing as a religious stage of development for nations, Russia was still in it. The events of 1906 would indicate that reverence for her state church, at least, had been seriously weakened.

³ The North India Bible Society, which is sixty years old, published and circulated, between 1890 and 1900, a yearly average of 87,000 copies of Bibles, New Testaments, and selected portions of them. Since 1900 this annual output has been nearly doubled, and the number rose in 1905 to 195,879.

archaeologists or worked out by critical research, which was unknown before, but because the attitude of Christian people and Christian ministers towards biblical study has become gradually revolutionized. Textual homiletics, textual theology, unscientific theories of interpretation, have become generally discredited. The spirit of free inquiry, which not long ago characterized but a few men like Strauss and Renan, has now begun to characterize all real Christian scholarship in the United States and most of it in the world at large. Here, from the absence of religious establishments and the presence of universal education at public charge, it has naturally had free scope. It has given a prominence before unknown in modern times, outside of China, to character and conduct as the foundations of a true life. It has brought the general Christian world to look upon them as about the only evidence worth having that in any man earth has been brought close to heaven, while still maintaining that character and conduct are the fruits of the ideal, the children of faith in the invisible and eternal. It has brought the wider world of civilized mankind in all continents to care little for a man's theological beliefs, everything for his beliefs, his real beliefs, as to what is the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Panislamism has gained a fresh inspiration from this source. The Young Turkish Party, already recognized as an important political force, founds itself on treating the Koran with the same free hand with which Christians treat the Bible, and so bringing its teachings into harmony with the new thought of a new time.

During the last few years the American people have insisted, to a marked degree, on the observance of higher ethical standards on the part of their public and of their business men. The movement in this direction has been a steady one for more than half a century. In 1843, the foremost English novelist, fresh from a visit to the United States, could speak of it as "that Republic, but yesterday let loose upon her noble course, and but to-day so maimed and lame, so full of sores and ulcers, foul to the eye and almost hopeless to the sense, that her best friends turn from the loathsome creature with disgust."¹ So severe an arraignment was unjustified in 1843. It would have been impossible and unthinkable at any time since, let us say, the Civil War. But it was not the Civil War that elevated the moral standards of the people. War is a salvation to some souls, a damnation to many more. "Treasons, stratagems, and spoils"—the spoils of the field and the spoils of the army contractor—make a poor soil for the growth of public morals. The

¹ Dickens in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, chap. XXII.

American people have grown to a purer life, or at least to a demand for a purer life on the part of those who lead their fortunes, mainly by force of a world-movement, which has simply found here the freest play.

The better relations between Jew and Christian that now generally exist are attributable, in no small degree, to the growth of this ethical spirit; not so much because ethics make for fraternity, as that this growth proceeds from a tendency on the part of Christians towards acceptance of the same fundamental religious principles. The Jew has never troubled himself very much with the question of personal immortality, and all that goes with it of responsibility and retribution. His aim has been to make the best of earth; his hope that of a Messianic era here. Christian theology has looked more to a future world as the real home of men, in an abode or state that, happy or miserable, was to endure forever.

Christendom, during the last few years, has been approaching the Judaic view, as best expressive of the immediate objects to be pursued in human life. Hence among those peoples which have gone farthest in this direction, the political and social condition of the Jews is more favorable than among those—like Russia, Roumania, and Austria—which have made no substantial change of position. If his life on this earth be the great thing for a man to regulate and plan for, why complain if the Jew wins the prizes of trade and wealth, though it be by concentrating his attention on material gains? “Go thou and do likewise” is becoming, perhaps too fast and with too little qualification, the general motto of the business world.

Christian theology anticipated evolution in endeavoring to account for what is base in human nature. It set it to the account of original sin. To raise up a being infected with that not simply from his birth, but through an inheritance from ancestors infected with it for countless generations, was a task which God only could accomplish. To Him it was the work of a moment; and they called it salvation.

It was a theory well calculated to have a profound effect on the human mind. It gave an immense power to a priesthood believed to have the power of speaking for God and declaring to any man that his salvation had been accomplished. It put them by the side of kings and above kings.

A time has come when the leaders of the church are beginning to say with John Fiske that “original sin is neither more nor less

than the brute inheritance which every man carries with him, and the process of evolution is an advance towards true salvation."

The church is changing—has changed—its ground. It is not losing—has not lost—its power. It makes use of the old truth in a new way. It was right at bottom.

The unfolding of the law of evolution from the first, for those who accepted it, unquestionably tended to narrow the order of things in which man has his being. As the bond between him and the lowest forms of life became visibly stronger, that between him and any form of life higher than himself became visibly weaker. He was of less importance in the world. Wallace could open the gates to the new vision of the past; he could not shut them. He could not lead men to any new standpoint from which they could look on the earth as the centre of the intellectual or moral universe.

The church, at first, everywhere disinclined—still much of it disinclined—to accept the theory of evolution with all that it implies, has begun to readjust itself to its new environment. If, she says, this new evolution can produce from some single torpid cell a being with the intellectual and moral force of man, why may not man contain the torpid cell out of which in some at least may be evolving and ultimately, in some other stage of being, may be evolved what for want of a better word we call a Spirit—something with an energy akin to what we name divine? Force is persistent. That it is we know. What it is we do not know. If persistent in what is material, why not persistent in what is immaterial? If persistent in what we call time and space, why not persistent in something which we do not dare to call time or space and vaguely name eternity?

But questions like these do not much concern the mass of humankind. The leaders of intellectual life are few. They are followed at a long interval. They know this, well. It is their office, in every generation, to set the goal, but to moderate rather than to speed the pace of the people as they turn in the new direction.

The leaders of intellectual life who are in positions of ecclesiastical authority, under the influence of these forces, have everywhere begun to preach a new theology. It is a theology of the present. It might almost be called a theology of the earth, earthy. Its foundation is still the existence of a great first cause, which men call God. Its aim is still to set forth the whole duty of man, and to found it on his duty towards this almighty and eternal source of his being. But it sets it forth with less assumption of a knowledge of the unseen. No Nicene creed, no creed professing to define the genesis and nature and attributes of God, could ever be the product

of the twentieth century. The modern pulpit and council are content to say with St. Paul that "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The churches of every faith, in some degree—of all in proportion to their share in the time-spirit of their generation—are pointing to Man as the only real revelation of the nature of God, and to the opportunities of the present life as what chiefly concerns him, in his highest as well as his lowest desires and activities. One hears little in churches led by an educated clergy of a future heaven, and less of a future hell. It is this pressing, immediate world about us, that is their theme. "One world at a time" is more and more becoming the practical doctrine of the modern pulpit. Do your duty to-day, and be not anxious about tomorrow, whether it be the morrow of the next sunrise or of a million ages.

What has been, what is to be the effect of this change in the attitude of the church on the course of human history? It will not remove the power of theistic appeal. If it should spread over all nations, and all faiths, it will leave unimpaired the motives of duty to God and country. A war to maintain the honor of fatherland and of the fathers from whom it was inherited will always enlist the sympathies of the people with double force, if they are quickened by religious convictions.

Recent events have shown that soldiers who believe they are fighting God's battles may yield before those not superior in numbers or arms who believe that in fighting they are honoring the first ancestors of the sovereign, whose spirit in an ancestor world holds sway over those of their own ancestors. The double character of the Mikado of Japan as spiritual leader and earthly sovereign, impressed by the institution of ancestor-worship upon every Japanese from infancy, moves him far more deeply than the Russian muzhik is affected by his reverence for the Czar as head of his country's church. Admiral Togo's message to the Mikado last year, attributing to his superhuman influence the annihilation of the Russian fleet, spoke the real conviction of a great man and a great people.

We must never forget that not only were the founders of all the great religions of Asiatic origin, but that religion is now a more vital force in Asia than on any other continent. The deep, if dreamy, spiritual insight, the brooding intellectual habit, the strength of antecedents, that belong to the East, put religion there in a position as lofty as it is unique.

Hegel observed that there are two natural steps in human life,

that of subjectivity and objectivity. The youth bends his thoughts towards the correspondence that he is to establish between himself and the universe. He proceeds from himself outwards. He joins his life to the ideal, in hope and faith. Years pass and he has found his place. There is a round of daily duties and perhaps of pleasures, on which his attention centres. His thoughts now turn not to the ideal but to what life in fact has brought him, and to how that shall be best accomplished.

The race of man pursues the same stages. In the East, they are still in the first. Even in Japan, so largely occidentalized, they are constructing for themselves a new ideal of Christianity. Except for Japan, they are what they were. Subjectivity still holds them captive.

China has recently abolished the requirement of familiarity with the Confucian classics on the part of those desiring official appointment or promotion. The first examination under the new system took place this fall, and the nine receiving the highest marks were men educated in the United States or Europe—the first of them a doctor of philosophy and the next a doctor of civil law of an American university.

A change like this involves, as a necessary consequence, the rise of new national ideals. The calm and restful tone of the Confucian philosophy of life will be replaced by something less smooth and more deep, more religious. The spirit of the West has burst upon the silent sea of self-satisfied seclusion on which China has been idly floating for two thousand years. It has troubled the waters. It may turn them into a river that will run far.

As respects Mohammedanism, the fundamental precepts of that faith are such as necessarily to give them a strong political effect.¹ Its adherents stand together, like the members of a secret order. In Europe they cling to their religion as closely as in Asia. In 1900, seven thousand Mohammedan Servians suddenly left the country, because one Mohammedan had been received into a Christian church.²

The strongest assurance of the power of the Sublime Porte is the general recognition by the Mohammedan world and the King of Great Britain as Emperor of India, of the Sultan of Turkey as the true Caliph or Commander of the Faithful. The strongest menace of the British Empire in the East is the utter foreignness there of

¹ Only by force of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878 has religious toleration been anything but an empty word at Constantinople.

² Francis H. E. Palmer, *Austro-Hungarian Life* (New York, 1903), p. 88.

Western Christianity. The European sent to Asia or Africa to govern a subject race finds himself separated from it by an aloofness which he cannot conquer. It does not proceed from him. He is often anxious to overcome it, in the native. But it is the inevitable fruit of antipathetic relations, springing from religious differences.

The religions of the West rule the religionist. The religion of Islam rules every Mohammedan, be he saint or sinner; and in case of war all are faithful to the commander of the faithful. Lord Cromer, a few months ago, received a warning letter from one professing to write in the name of his people of Egypt, and whose stately periods remind one of the Hebrew prophets. It was addressed to "the Reformer of Egypt."

He must be blind [said the writer], who sees not what the English have wrought in Egypt; the gates of justice stand open to the poor; the streams flow through the land and are not stopped at the order of the strong; the poor man is lifted up and the rich man pulled down; the hand of the oppressor and the briber is struck when outstretched to do evil. Our eyes see these things and we know from whom they come. You will say: "Be thankful, oh, men of Egypt! and bless those who benefit you;" and very many of us—those who preserve a free mind and are not ruled by flattery and guile—are thankful. But thanks lie on the surface of the heart, and beneath is a deep well.

While peace is in the land the spirit of Islam sleeps. We hear the Imam cry out in the mosque against the unbelievers, but his words pass by like wind and are lost. Children hear them for the first time and do not understand them; old men have heard them from childhood and pay no heed.

But it is said, "There is war between England and Abdul-Hamid Khan." If that be so, a change must come. The words of the Imam are echoed in every heart and every Moslem hears only the cry of the faith. As men we do not love the sons of Osman; the children at the breast know their words, and that they have trodden down the Egyptians like dry reeds. But as Moslems they are our brethren; the Khalif holds the sacred places and the noble relics. Though the Khalif were hapless as Bajazid, cruel as Murad, or mad as Ibrahim, he is the shadow of God, and every Moslem must leap up at his call as the willing servant to his master, though the wolf may devour his child while he does his master's work. The call of the Sultan is the call of the faith; it carries with it the command of the Prophet, blessings, etc. I and many more trust that all may yet be peace; but if it be war, be sure that he who has a sword will draw it, he who has a club will strike with it. The women will cry from the housetops, "God give victory to Islam!"

You will say, "The Egyptian is more ungrateful than a dog, which remembers the hand which fed him. He is foolish as the mad-man who pulls down the roof tree of his house upon himself." It may be so to worldly eyes, but in the time of danger to Islam the Moslem turns away from the things of this world and thirsts only for the service of his faith, even though he looks in the face of death. May God (His name be glorified) avert the evil.

It is the existence of this spirit which makes the punishments often inflicted on insurgents by the British in their Eastern possessions sharp up to the point of barbarism. Nothing less tells there.

It is the mosque that guards the palace of the Sultan.

Sir William Marriott, when in company with Ismail Pasha, the first Khedive of Egypt, happened to meet in Boulogne a procession of young girls on their way to their first communion. The pasha saluted it with a low reverence. "Your Highness is more Catholic than the Catholics", said Sir William. "Ah," was the reply, "you see I have ruled, and no man can rule without religion."¹

On this point East and West can both agree. Napoleon said, in reference to the Concordat of 1801, that he saw in the church not the mystery of the incarnation but the mystery of social order. Later, at the height of his power, speaking in the same vein, he intimated his belief that Christianity was an illusion but a very useful one. It assured the tranquillity of the state in reconciling man with himself and giving him a philosophy to live by. The age of illusions was for nations, as for individuals, the age of happiness.²

It is not for history to pronounce whether any religion or all religions be founded on mere illusions. She must leave that to theologians and psychologists. But in her field of inductive sociology, she owns still the continuing force of the religious motive.

In modern politics, it takes on a new importance. They are expressed in terms of representative government. It may be representation by a legislature, or by a ministry. In either case it will assume to represent the people by representing a party. Representative government implies and involves party organization. Party organization is unfavorable to the expression of candid, impartial public opinion. But let any religious question be involved, and public opinion will find a way to express itself, which no party machinery can seriously obstruct.

So in world-politics, now so largely governed by a public opinion of the world, the pressure that can be brought upon any one power by others—that is brought upon each by other peoples through the press—will be immensely strengthened if it be impelled by an ethical or religious motive;—ethical or religious, for an ethical impulse common to many nations belongs to the religion of humanity.

That grows as ecclesiasticism declines. The Christian church has been gradually reduced, to use the phrase of Gardiner, "from the exercise of power to the employment of influence". Its tend-

¹ *Memoirs of Grant Duff*, II. 18.

² *Memoirs of Talleyrand*, Putnam's edition, I. 339.

encies of thought run, more than those fostered by any other of the great religions, towards loyalty to humanity, rather than to race. It is the only one that makes any serious effort to preach its gospel "to every creature". "We recognize", said Tertullian, "one commonwealth, the world." It does not hesitate to put its own rules above those assumed for political science or economy. From the churches of England came the last great impulse that carried through the Corn Laws, and made free trade her policy to-day. There are signs of a movement in the churches of the United States in the same direction. Should it gather force, statesmen must reckon seriously with it.

Renan, in his *Life of Jesus*,¹ remarks that he was the first of men to conceive, or at all events to put life into that thought, that liberty was something independent of politics; that one's country is not everything; and that the man is anterior and superior to the citizen.

The share of government in human society becomes less obtrusive as time goes on. Show of force declines as the sentiment of obedience to law becomes more prevalent. Public authority is more and more localized in small political communities, there to be administered by representatives of the inhabitants. These social principles go to diminish the weight of national governments, and make the individual man feel that he is a citizen first of his own local community and then of the world. They also strongly reinforce the general trend of the Christian religion (which we may fairly say is to-day the strongest of any in its influence upon human history) towards insistence on universal brotherhood as the ultimate criterion of international obligations.

SIMEON E. BALDWIN.

¹ Chap. vii.